

CHAMBERS' EDINBURGH JOURNAL

CONDUCTED BY WILLIAM AND ROBERT CHAMBERS, EDITORS OF 'CHAMBERS'S INFORMATION FOR THE PEOPLE,' 'CHAMBERS'S EDUCATIONAL COURSE,' &c.

No. 225. NEW SERIES.

SATURDAY, APRIL 22, 1848.

PRICE 1½d.

A WORD ON FUN.

SOME people might consider this as the age of great mechanical appliances, or great economical and political modifications—the age of steam, the age of free trade, the age of reform; and so forth. Perhaps it might be more distinctly characterised as the Age of Mirth or Comicality. Certainly joking is carried to a height which it was never known to attain in any former epoch. One may now enter a company, and never hear one word spoken in earnest during the whole evening, nothing but a rattle of 'quips, and cranks, and wanton wiles,' from beginning to end. I remark of one or two young friends of mine—chiefly barristers—that throughout many years I have had to interpret their meaning in the exact reverse of their language, as they are pleased to deliver themselves only in the manner of irony. Some whom I know to be worthy and kind-hearted, assume a biting, taunting tone of speech, as if very idleness, and the easy-chair state of all things in this too-favoured country, had utterly corrupted them. It is a very unfortunate state of things for those who, like myself, continue to think and speak of things pretty nearly as they appear, and strain in general to preserve a sober and equable spirit, for now the world is wholly out of harmony with us. If we enunciate a plain, simple truth, it is sure to be taken out of our mouth, and carried off in a whirlwind of ridicule. If we sit silent, we are treated only to comical and sarcastic observations on men and things, or to language purposely cast in a mould of exaggeration and distortion, in order to turn the things to which it refers into ridicule. A few hours spent in this way leaves us with the taste of cinereal fruit upon our lips, or the sense of having wandered through a tangled wilderness, where journeying gave neither pleasure nor instruction—only fatigue.

Thus your joking people are themselves, I fear, no joke. Had I not a partiality for mild terms, I should rather be disposed to describe them as social pests. Wherever they go, they spread their disease—the habit of ridicule: it flies about like the measles or the scarlet fever; and as with the measles and the scarlet fever, the young take the disorder more easily than the mature. Those who indulge the habit are generally supposed to be very witty; but this, I again fear, is a mistake: the greater part of them are merely reckless and ill-natured. Ill-natured fun causes much more laughter than the finest wit or richest humour. A delicate stroke of genuine wit will be appreciated by few in a company; while an ill-natured imitation, or a caricature of an absent acquaintance, will set a whole host of barren spectators in a roar. The greater part of the fun that is going is thus not only not amusing to a right-spirited person—it is positively tedious and disagreeable. No-

thing can be more annoying to an enlarged and rational mind, than to be compelled to remain in contact with one of these ridicule-loving natures, that persist in seeing something funny in everything. No reverence have they for high and solemn things—no enthusiastic admiration for noble and virtuous things—no love for good and beautiful things. High, solemn, noble, and beautiful, are qualities they only appreciate on account of their susceptibility of being turned, by means of their everlasting Harlequin's wand, into burlesque. Of men who are carried away by one small idea, a few may occasionally be met with in the *lowest* walks of science or art. Of such a one the poet says, with beautiful indignation, he

'Would peep and botanise
Upon his mother's grave.'

What would he say of the man who should go to his mother's grave and make a joke of the quaint wording of the epitaph? The regular lover of the ridiculous is quite capable of this; nothing is sacred to him; he would burlesque Homer, and travesty 'Paradise Lost.' He would see nothing to admire in the Elgin Marbles, but a great deal to laugh at; he would paint a caricature of Raphael's 'Transfiguration;' he would jest on skulls and coffins, on life, and death, and love, and immortality. Ridicule is a greater iconoclast than Mohammed or John Knox. It throws down the statues of great men, the saints and heroes of a past age; it shivers them with its iron Harlequin truncheon, and uses the fragments as missiles against the great men of the present day. Like many a deadly destroyer, it calls itself, and persuades others to believe that it is, a reformer. A pernicious falsehood, unjustly attributed to Lord Shaftesbury, once got current in the world, and is often acted upon even now: you will find many who make ridicule the test of truth.

Miss Landon said truly in one of her novels ('Francesca Carrara,' I believe), that 'too great love of the ridiculous is the dry-rot of all that is high and noble in youth.' It is painful to observe the mocking spirit, the *persiflage*, the satirical tone which pervades most of the youthful circles around us. Like a canker, it consumes the better part of their nature. They are incapable of deep affection for others. It has passed into a proverb that such persons 'would sacrifice their best friend for a *bon-mot*.' Vanity and frivolity of intellect must be about equal in such natures, whatever may be their cleverness in seizing and turning to account all that they observe around them. Those who seek the ridiculous in all things, can never, no, never, become artists, or appreciate art; those who are on the look-out for the ridiculous, will never discover the beautiful—they will not even see it when it is pointed out to them. They wear strange spectacles, which distort forms, and give a false colouring to objects.

They could look at the *Venus de Medici*, and find something droll in it; but they could no more see its beauty than they could see it at all if they had been born blind. Neither can those who love the ridiculous about all things, love science, or search out her truths. Such love, and such seeking, demand serious and constant self-devotion to the pursuit of truth: self must be forgotten in strict investigation; and all the pomps and vanities, the pudding and the praise, the enjoyment and the fun which the world affords, must be matters of perfect indifference to the man of science. So far from loving science, the habitual ridiculer looks upon her votaries as amongst the most absurd and laughable sights under heaven.

And whence comes all this diseased love of the ridiculous? From ignorance, from idleness, from vanity. First, people are ignorant, and they laugh at what they do not understand; then they are idle, and go on laughing, because it is easier to laugh than to try to understand; lastly, they are vain, and keep on laughing, because others fancy they must be superior to all they laugh at, and because they half believe it themselves.

If, in what has been said above, I have not exaggerated this evil of our age, I shall rejoice to be the means of directing the reader's attention to it. Do not encourage in yourself a disposition to turn all things into a jest or a satire; resist as much as possible the influence of the surrounding spirit of mockery; keep your mind intent on high things; be earnest, be truthful, be loving, and you will never be a scoffier or an ill-natured satirist. You may, nevertheless, have a keener relish for true humour, and a finer perception of wit, than those who run wild after the ridiculous. The most delicate, the sharpest and most polished wit, does not raise a loud laugh; it awakes a bright smile of pleasure, as at the sight of a newly-created piece of beauty, and then the smile passes away into the expression of admiration. The richest, rarest, most exquisite humour, is more nearly connected with a tear than with a broad grin. These the most refined mind may intensely enjoy, without being in the least danger of falling into the slough over which I would here erect a ticket of warning.

A PASSAGE OF MEXICAN LIFE.

I HAD made up my mind, before returning to the sea-coast, to visit the presidio of Tubac, and bade my guide Anastasio to hold himself in readiness for the journey. Pressing matters of business, however, required his presence in a distant quarter; it was therefore agreed that he should conduct me to a place from which I might find my way alone, by adhering implicitly to the instructions he would give me as to the route. Having completed our preparations, we started the next morning before daybreak. Besides a small quantity of pinola in a valise, we each carried a goatskin filled with water, as the route lay across a region entirely devoid of the precious element. Believing this to be our whole stock of provisions, I was surprised when daylight came to see a sheep's head, newly cut from the carcase, hanging to Anastasio's saddle, and inquired what he intended to do with it.

'It is our hope for to-morrow's breakfast,' he answered: 'it will be the last meal we shall eat together, and I should like you to say whether you have ever eaten anything more juicy than a sheep's head (*latemada*)—smothered—seasoned with pimento, and basted with brandy. I carry all that we shall want in one of my *mochilas*,' he added, pointing to the leathern pouches worn by travellers.

In proportion as we advanced, the country presented a new aspect. At first a few scarcely-beaten paths had guided us into the solitudes, but these tracks ended in immense prairies, without trees or bushes, but which, covered with tall grass, that bent at the least breath of air, presented the appearance of an agitated gulf surrounded by blue hills. So extensive were these plains, that the horizon seemed always to flee before us, notwithstanding the speed of our horses; and we were still in the interminable savannas as the sun went down. We kept on, however, steering our course by the pole-star, until we reached the borders of the sandy regions, where we halted under the shelter of a little wood.

As soon as our frugal repast was over, Anastasio thought of the next morning's breakfast; the preparations for which are worthy of record. With his knife he dug a hole in the loose soil, about a foot in depth and diameter, and filled the cavity with dried leaves, which he set on fire, and threw in a handful of light branches. On this a pile of thicker sticks was placed, and covered with a layer of pebbles. As the wood burnt away, the stones became hot, and with the decrease of the fire, sank to the bottom of the hole. The sheep's head, with its woolly covering, was then thrown into this oven, and the orifice closed with green branches, over which the operator trampled several layers of earth. When this was done, Anastasio announced that we had nothing to do but to sleep until morning.

The next day, as soon as the sun appeared, Anastasio saddled our horses for the last time; he then drew the skins of water from the bushes, where they had been placed to be kept cool, and put his brandy flask within reach. The hole in which the sheep's head was baking was next to be opened; the knife had scarcely touched the covering of earth, when a savoury odour arose from the cavity. The appearance of the *latemada*, when first drawn out, was but slightly appetising: it looked like a burnt shapeless lump; but Anastasio, removing carefully the black crust, brought into view the juicy meat beneath; and it must be confessed that our parting meal was one of the most delicious. At last the moment of separation came; always respectful, my guide advanced to hold my stirrup: I pressed his hand as that of a friend; my course lay to the north, his to the south, and we soon lost sight of each other.

Anastasio's multiplied instructions relieved me of all inquietude as to the path I was to take, and I pushed resolutely forwards. So temperate are Mexican horses, that I could count upon my animal being able to traverse the distance that separated us from a small river without drinking. My goatskin was half full: it was scarcely eight in the morning, and I had ten hours of sun before me; but the sun which lighted me on my way, at the same time burnt up the desert. As it rose higher above the horizon, a scorching reflection rose from the sandy soil; the south wind dried my lips; it seemed that I was breathing fire instead of air. I went on thus for two hours, when a strange weakness seized me, a shudder ran through my whole body, and I shivered with cold on the scorching plain. After struggling with the malady for some time, I dismounted, hoping to warm myself upon the hot sand. A devouring heat, in fact, succeeded, during which I finished my last drop of water without thinking of the future. Meantime the sun rose higher, and increased the suffocating heat. I tried to remount my horse, but fell down again in extreme lassitude, while my thirst became more ardent than ever. New attempts only served to convince me more of my inability. I was yielding to the heavy effects of a drowsy languor, when a distant noise struck my ear, similar to that of a dragoon's sword rattling against his spurs. Shortly after a horseman, well armed and mounted, stopped before me: I opened my eyes.

'Holla! friend,' he cried in a rough voice, 'what are you doing there?' My long beard, and worn and dusty garments, were perhaps an excuse for this impe-

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rious and familiar inquiry. I was, however, annoyed, and replied at first bluntly, 'Do you not see I am occupied—dying of thirst!'

The stranger smiled. A distended skin hung at his saddle-bow; the sight of it, while redoubling my thirst, dispelled my pride. I spoke again, and asked the unknown rider to lend me the precious object.

'Heaven forbid that I should refuse you!' he answered in a milder tone. I stretched out my hand greedily; but the horseman, seeing me disposed to empty the skin, filled a calabash, which he held out to me. I swallowed the contents at a draught. When I had somewhat recovered, my benefactor inquired where I was going.

'To the presidio of Tubac,' was my answer.

'To the presidio of Tubac!' he repeated in astonishment. 'By San Josef, your back is towards it!'

In the bewilderment caused by my fever I had forgotten Anastasio's instructions, and mistaken the route. The path I was following, as I could see by the sun, led to the west.

'Listen,' said the stranger, as he again gave me to drink, but as parsimoniously as the first time; 'by sundown you may reach the *hacienda de la Noria*. Take my advice, and go there; you will be well received.'

I alleged my extreme weakness. He reflected for a moment, and then continued—'I cannot wait to conduct you: imperative reasons compel me to be far from here by the close of the day, and motives not less powerful ought to prevent me from going to the hacienda; but as my road passes close by, I will call, and have some water and a spare horse sent to you; for exhausted as you and your beast appear to be, you cannot arrive to-day unassisted: and in these waterless solitudes, with such a sun as this, he who does not arrive to-day, will not arrive to-morrow. Try, however, to regain a little strength, and advance slowly. If you follow, step by step, the trace of my lasso, which I will let drag upon the sand, you will not be likely to go astray again.'

I thanked him warmly for his good intentions. 'A last caution,' he said: 'do not forget to say that chance alone takes you to the hacienda.' With these words he loosened the coil of his leathern rope, and rode off at a brisk trot, leaving a slight furrow upon the sand. The hope of soon arriving at an inhabited place, and the water I had drunk, gave me a slight renewal of strength. For the first time my position appeared to me such as it really was, and I remounted my horse; but the poor animal had not, as I, been able to appease his thirst: with drooping head and ears he crawled, rather than walked, notwithstanding the persuasion of the spur. From time to time I stopped, trying to discover the scarcely-visible traces of the lasso upon the sand, and hoping to hear the voices of those sent in quest of me; but all was silent; and I then continued my way, mechanically repeating the words, 'He who does not arrive to-day, will not arrive to-morrow.' The sun was already getting low, the sand sent up a scorching heat, and the hum of insects announced the coming darkness. Physical pain again began to heighten mental anguish: I felt my tongue swell, and my throat on fire. All at once my horse neighed; and as if some mysterious communication came to him upon the wind, set off at a more rapid pace; and I, just as the sun was sinking behind a stripe of wood at the horizon, fancied that I heard the distant lowing of cattle. In another half hour I reached the trees behind which the sun had disappeared. An immense plain stretched before me, presenting a most radiant spectacle, only to be appreciated by those who have been tortured with thirst in deserts of unknown extent.

An immense carpet of bright green turf, intersected with numerous paths, covered the surface of the plain. Numerous gum-trees, thickly grouped, formed a pleasant shelter. The cool damp air which caressed my face, still inflamed with the heat of the scorching waste, announced the presence of water, fertilising the delightful oasis. In fact, a large cistern, supplied from

an abundant spring, stood under the shade of a few trees at a little distance. An enormous wheel, turned by four pairs of mules, poured a continual supply of water from the leathern buckets on its rim into the hollowed trunks of gigantic trees, where it sparkled gloriously in the beams of sunset. In these enormous troughs the numerous cattle came to drink, while at a distance a troop of horses were leaping and galloping in formidable tumult. Jackals, and other nocturnal depredators, driven by thirst, seemed to forget that the sun was yet shining, and the presence of man, and showed their lank muzzles at a distance, eager to drink of the spring, which poured out its streams for all. Such must have been the encampments of the Biblical ages, formed by the tents and dependents of the patriarchs.

In an instant, horse and rider, we began to drink as though we wished to drain the fountain. While stopping to take breath, I heard voices behind a little clump of trees, which I soon made out to be those of two men playing at cards. I learned, as they continued to converse, that one of them had been sent to my assistance; but meeting with a comrade here on the skirts of the hacienda, the unconquerable love of gaming, born with every Mexican, made him sit down to play, leaving me to take my chance. I rode round, to show that his services in my case would not now be required: the only remark he made was one of pleasure at being able to prolong his game. I left them at their cards, and leading my horse, walked down to the hacienda. It was yet at some distance, and twilight was darkening the landscape as I passed long rows of posts on either side of the path forming the cattle enclosures. One was deserted, but in the other thick clouds of dust were driven about. Approaching nearer to the fence, I saw a bull struggling furiously, with a man upon his back, armed with a knife, while another individual was holding a cord passed several times round the animal's legs. The rider seemed to be paring down the bull's horns, and sharpening their extremities; the beast, finding resistance vain, at last lay still, when the man dipped a thick bung into a calabash, and rubbed it several times up and down the horns, as though to coat them with some liquid preparation. As soon as the operation was over, the bull was released from his fastenings; and before his rage had time to vent itself, his two tormentors had reached the entrance to the enclosure, and barricaded it with strong beams on the side opposite to that where I was standing. In the rider of the animal I recognised the horseman who had relieved me in the desert some hours previously. What motive could have induced him to stay at the hacienda, fearful as he appeared to be of calling there? It was a mystery I could not explain, and my thoughts were still occupied with it as I walked into the courtyard of the building.

During my residence in this place I witnessed many remarkable incidents highly characteristic of the people and the country. The one, however, that made the most impression upon me is intimately connected with the circumstance above described. The day after my arrival was an anniversary, in which all the horsemen of the establishment vied with each other in showing their skill and dexterity in managing the half-wild animals beneath them. To a stranger, the sight was most interesting and exciting, so great appeared the hazard, and such the daring exhibited. After several hours passed in this way, one of the men came up with a bundle of short lances under his arm, and immediately a cry was raised for Cayetano, who, to my great surprise, was invested with the office of mayor-domo, or major-domo, of the establishment, and who had undertaken to break a weapon with the bull.

A single bull only remained in the spacious enclosure; it was the one I had seen thrown down the previous evening. Cayetano, whose features showed the traces of envious passion, took one of the *garrochas*, or short lances, and entered unaccompanied into the arena. The bull was released from the tether by which he had been fastened to a post, and needed no exciting to rush to

the attack. Cayetano made a few passes as an accomplished cavalier, to avoid the first assault, and waited a favourable moment for a thrust. The opportunity soon presented itself; the bull stooped to collect his strength for a new rush, and immediately the point of the garrocha was buried in his shoulder-joint, and his opponent's vigorous arm held him at bay; but as he looked round in triumph, the lance broke, and in the first moment of surprise, he was unable to escape the charge of the infuriated animal. With a sudden start Cayetano brought his hand to his thigh, where a few drops of blood stained his white linen drawers. An imprecation burst from his lips, more in rage at the humiliation than from pain; he asked for a new lance, and moved towards the opposite end of the lists.

A few minutes passed before the weapon was brought, when he again advanced to meet the bull. Cayetano's manner, however, betrayed a singular hesitation: I knew it could not arise from fear, as I had once before seen him cool and collected in more critical circumstances. An air of dejection that speedily followed the former uncertainty was still more inexplicable, for no blood had followed the first few drops upon his leg. At last, just as he was lifting his lance mechanically for another thrust at the bull, his horse reared, shrunk back, and to the general surprise, the rider offered no resistance, but suffered himself to be carried from the enclosure. Mingled yells, hisses, and hootings were lavished upon him in his flight. Cayetano, however, appeared to be insensible to the contumely; he reeled in the saddle like a drunken man, while his face assumed a death-like pallor.

'The chaplain! the chaplain!' cried several voices in an ironical tone: 'there goes a Christian in danger of death,' and another volley of hisses followed the major-domo, who appeared to be universally detested. But the chaplain, who had shown much interest in the spectacle, seemed unwilling to quit his seat, or to consider the call on his functions as serious, until at a sign from his chief he mounted his horse reluctantly, and rode after the fugitive.

The bull had profited by the tumult to make his escape to the forest, without any one offering resistance. This result was not at all to the taste of the numerous dependents of the hacienda, and they finished the day with new feasts of horsemanship. Late in the evening, on returning to the house, I met the individual to whose passion for card-playing my life had nearly fallen, a sacrifice the day before, and inquired what had become of Cayetano, when, to my astonishment, Juan, for that was the man's name, told me that the unlucky major-domo was dead. 'Dead!' I exclaimed; 'he was scarcely wounded.'

'True,' replied the other; 'but it appears that the bull's horns had been washed over with the juice of the *palo mulato*,* and the death of his antagonist was as horrible as it was rapid. You have not forgotten the stranger who relieved you in the desert, and called here to send you assistance; well, this man, Feliciano, is brother of one of Cayetano's former friends. This friend was acquainted with a secret, of which our major-domo would have liked to deprive him, and of his life at the same time, and had communicated it to his brother, together with his suspicions of Cayetano's character. These suspicions were but too well founded. One day Feliciano's brother went out in a boat with his treacherous enemy, and was never seen afterwards. Feliciano then suspected that his brother had been made away with, and commenced a search for the murderer. Having heard that Cayetano was living here, he started for the hacienda, and arrived just in time to see his enemy die—and without confessing.'

While we were speaking, the chaplain with another horseman came up: from their conversation, I learned that the poisoning of the bull's horns was regarded as an inexplicable mystery. The singular operation, how-

ever, of which I had been a spectator the previous evening, without being myself seen, left me no reason to doubt that Feliciano had adopted it as a ready and effectual means of satisfying his vengeance.

THE BATH POSTBOY.

It was in the early part of the last century, when the mail was transmitted from the principal towns of England in charge of a mounted postman, with holster-pistols and saddle-bags, and carried from the smaller ones by poor boys, who received a halfpenny a mile for serving the post-office in all weathers, that the postmaster of Bath informed all whom it might concern, by a printed bill in the window, that a smart active lad of fifteen or thereby was required to carry the mail between that town and Marlborough, at the above-mentioned rate of wages.

The road was long and rough; and three days had already passed, during which the mail was carried by the postmaster's own good boy, and man-of-all-work, much to his discomfort, and the manifest dissatisfaction of the good people of Marlborough, to whom their letters came several hours too late: but no candidate for the situation had yet presented himself. At length, on the fourth morning, which was that of a sultry July day, a thin, muscular, intelligent-looking boy, dressed in the habiliments of earlier years, which he had evidently outgrown, made his appearance, cap in hand, before Mr Burton the senior clerk, and inquired, 'Sir, if you please, would I be old enough to carry the Marlborough bag? I'm only fourteen yet, but I'll always be growing older and wiser I hope.'

'And maybe worse!' muttered the clerk, who happened to be out of temper that morning. 'But step in here,' he continued, pointing to another room, 'and Mr Lenthem will see what you're fit for.'

Mr Lenthem was a quiet elderly gentleman, who had kept the post-office for several years in the rich and gay city of Bath, which was, at the period of our story, the resort of all the fashionables of Britain, especially in the summer season, resembling in that respect what Brighton has since become. He spoke to the boy more civilly than his clerk had done; said he considered him tall enough for the business; and then inquired what was his name, where his parents lived, and if he knew any respectable person who would give him a character for honesty and sobriety, as without such a certificate the post-office could not employ him? The boy answered that his name was Ralph Allen; that his father had been a poor tradesman, but he was dead, and his mother supported herself by taking in washing; and 'I wasn't brought up here, sir; but my mother came in hopes of getting fine work from the gentry; and here's a certificate from a kind gentleman, the vicar of our parish: I used to run errands for him, and he said it might be useful to me.'

'This is to certify that Ralph Allen is a sensible, honest, industrious boy, and I hope will continue to be so.—William Warburton,' said the postmaster, reading aloud. 'Well, that's a good certificate, though the writer is unknown to me; but we will let it pass for this time, and take you on trial.'

After several exhortations to be careful of the mail, and walk fast, that he might arrive in time, Ralph Allen was duly equipped with a leathern bag, suspended by a strap over his shoulder, containing all the letters and newspapers in those days transmitted to Marlborough, and sent forth to earn the halfpenny per mile.

Day after day he performed that appointed journey, through sun and shower, going and coming to the entire satisfaction of the postmasters of Bath and Marlborough. Roads were not then so convenient for travellers, nor time so precious with the public, as at present; but Ralph was never known to loiter by the way, nor arrive an hour too late, which could seldom be said of other postboys. Travellers between the

* A species of poisonous sumach.

towns soon began to know him on the road, and remarked from stage-coach, wagon, or saddle—the only modes of conveyance in those days—that his conduct was always careful and steady; and people who did not travel trusted him with small messages in consequence of their reports. If a lady wanted a fashionable cap from Bath, or a notable housekeeper some trifle which could be bought cheaper in Marlborough, Ralph Allen was known to be a soberer and less exorbitant carrier than either the coachman or wagoner, and he was preferred accordingly. This was a source of additional gain, which increased every day, till the boy generally reached his destination in either town laden with parcels of all sorts and sizes, for the carriage of which he received from twopence to a farthing, as the case might be, or the liberality of his employers dictated. How the short time allowed between the close of his daily duty and his nightly rest was usually spent in his mother's poor but clean garret, nobody could tell; till Mr Leatham, who had by this time a high opinion of his postboy for general good conduct and correctness in his station, inquired one morning, while Ralph waited for the mail, what book was that protruding from his pocket?

'It's the "Universal Spelling-Book," sir,' said Ralph, reddening as he pulled out the well-worn volume. 'I try to learn at home in the little time I have, and can now nearly read.'

'That's well, my boy,' said Mr Leatham: 'I wish the rest of our boys would spend their leisure time so.'

'And, sir,' continued Ralph, now encouraged to speak out, 'I'm trying to write too, and have got the master of the Blue-Coat School to give me a lesson sometimes for doing his messages, sir.'

'You'll be a clerk yet, Ralph,' said the postmaster laughing. 'But it is a good endeavour, and I hope you'll succeed; but mind be careful of the mail.'

His employer's words turned out true, though spoken half in jest. Ralph continued to earn, by every honest though small way within his reach: his earnings were saved to purchase an old book when he could not borrow it, or supply himself with pens, ink, and paper; by which he at once amused and improved his few leisure hours in reading, or even spelling, to his mother, when her day's toil was also done, and practising the chance lessons he could obtain from the schoolmaster. Reading was at that period a rare thing in his class, and cheap books of instruction were equally so; but from the spelling-book, Ralph Allen advanced to the dictionary and grammar; from 'strokes,' to writing a good fair hand. His savings also increased by slow degrees, for both he and his mother were prudent; and Ralph only wished for the time when he might aspire to some better situation, and be enabled to add to her rest and comfort. Five years had thus passed away; Ralph Allen had grown almost a man, when all the message-senders of Bath, amongst whom he was well known, rejoiced, even amid their regrets that they must look out for another carrier, to hear that Ralph Allen had been promoted, through the kindness of Mr Leatham, to a clerkship in the Bath post-office, and was actually seen in a new suit of clothes performing his new duties at the post-office window. After this his mother washed nothing but lace and cambric, and Ralph was as steady and obliging in the post-office as he had been with the mail on his back. His salary was comparatively small, but his prudence was great; and in another year or two, people discovered that Ralph had something in the bank. His habits of reading and thought also gave him an ability to invent useful improvements in the post-office, which was then very imperfectly managed. These were modestly proposed; and as their necessity was seen, they soon obtained the sanction of the superior authorities, and raised the young clerk not only in their estimation, but in office also, as in three years after his entrance he succeeded the senior clerk, Mr Burton, by whom his application for the carriage of the Marlborough bag had been so ungraciously received, and who now retired to a

small property he had purchased in the country. Two years more, and Ralph himself began to think of purchasing property also. There was a large sterile farm called Coome Down in the neighbourhood of the city, which the last three tenants had successively left in disgust and weariness, declaring that their labour and money both were lost on such an unprofitable spot, and the landlord offered it for sheep-grazing on the very lowest terms. Great was the astonishment of all who knew him, when Ralph Allen became the purchaser of these poor and barren acres. Some said the young man's brain was turned with the books he read, and even his mother shook her head, and hoped it would turn out for the best; but Ralph gave up his situation in the post-office, collected round him workmen and tools, and commenced, not without creating much wonder and many surmises, to break up the ground in all directions, as if in search of a mine.

'Neighbour, do you expect to find a pot of gold in that farm?' said an old farmer to him over the fence one morning, where he and his men were delving at a rocky spot that never could be cultivated.

'No,' said Ralph; 'but I expected, and, thank Providence, I have found, a good stone quarry, which will repay me, and be useful to you good town; and he pointed to the spires of Bath.'

'My stars!' cried the farmer, 'he's not mad after all!' And so thought all Ralph's neighbours, when buyers came and workmen thronged to the new quarry; and scarcely a gentleman's house or public building of any description could be commenced in Bath without a supply of stone from Mr Allen, as the Bath postboy was now deservedly called.

Mrs Allen had long given up washing, and gone to reside in a neat cottage which her son built out of the first produce of his quarry; and many of her former employers saluted the good woman as she passed to St Mary's church in her black sarsanet sac, high-heeled shoes, and velvet hood, like a respectable old lady of the period. About this time the works of the great Dr Warburton were attracting public attention, and much talked of in the best society of Bath. Ralph Allen brought the latest published volume home one day, and found his mother seated in the small parlour with his old friend Mr Leatham, who was about to retire from public business, and had called to see him. 'What books you do buy, Ralph!' said the old woman, who had always a suspicion of her son's extravagance on this point; and she pointed to a large book-case, where Dryden, Tillotson, and all the best authors of the preceding age might be seen in their works, closely ranged together. 'It was only last week,' continued the good dame, 'that you brought home that book about fame, written by one Mr Pope.'

'And don't you know, mother, who is the writer of this volume?' said Ralph. 'Don't you remember Mr Warburton, the parson of our own Greasley, in Nottinghamshire, who gave me the certificate which I presented to you, Mr Leatham, ten years ago, when I wished to be postboy to Marlborough?'

This was true; the vicar of Greasley became the celebrated Dr Warburton, afterwards Bishop of Gloucester; and it was said Mr Leatham's family kept that certificate like a sort of relic.

'Ralph Allen's making his fortune' was the usual remark of everybody about Bath when the quarry was mentioned; and it had now grown an important matter, as the whole property of Coome Down, which so many farmers had called a dead loss, was found to be one vast bed of the best building stone.

Ralph was making money fast, and his deposits in the bank increased every year; but his aims did not end there—the experience of his former situation in the post-office was at length employed to some purpose. Sundry useful arrangements and inventions had long ago made his name and abilities known to the authorities of that department. At the period of our story, the post-office in almost every county was farmed by

some wealthy or enterprising person, who took its whole revenue and expenses in his own hands, paying to the government a certain sum annually, according to his contract. Ralph, who had acquired a considerable acquaintance with all the details of the business, and had, besides, the good opinion of the most influential functionaries, proposed to vest the small fortune already gained by the Coome Down quarry in a post-office contract for all England; and his proposal was accepted. From this period the career of Ralph Allen was one of uninterrupted prosperity. Under his administration, the post-office revenue, even in that age of comparatively little letter-writing, was almost doubled in a few years, owing to the better arrangements introduced by him in the transmission of mails, and various postage regulations, which have made his name celebrated as one of the few who have conferred benefits of a lasting kind on their native country. But Ralph Allen was destined to become, if possible, still more honourably known to fame. From his earliest youth he had cultivated his mind, as well as improved his fortune; as without the former endeavour, the latter would have been but half success, though wealth had been gathered like the sand. His post-office contract in a short time realised such an income, as made the proprietor one of the richest men in the neighbourhood of Bath.

Mrs Allen had lived to see her son's prudent conduct and perseverance rewarded to an extent of which she had never dreamt; and the good dame closed her days in peace and comfort in the pleasant cottage at Coome Down, having nothing to regret, and no annoyance, but a shadowy fear, which at times slightly agitated the calm current of her latter-day thoughts, that Ralph was buying too many books. But having gained the summit of his early ambition—a well and honourably-won fortune—he determined to enjoy it agreeably to his own refined taste, in the munificent encouragement of arts and literature. He had acquired general respect as well as riches; and as his fortune raised him gradually in the scale of society, had won the esteem, and formed the acquaintance, of men celebrated for their talents, and still famous through their works. Pope, Fielding, Swift, and Goldsmith, were among the number of his friends; and the titled and fashionable paid a natural tribute to merit and success, by including Mr Allen in their most select society.

The country round Bath is one of the finest districts in England, being diversified with beautiful wood-crowned hills and broad green meadows: one property, in particular, popularly called Prior Park, had long attracted Ralph Allen's eye from the barren slopes of Coome Down, and there, he often said, he should wish, if fortune permitted him, to build a mansion worthy of the scene. This project was at last put in execution. The possessor of the estate ruined his affairs by carelessness and extravagance in London: it was, in consequence, offered for sale, and Ralph Allen, Esq. became the purchaser of Prior Park. Here, on the slope of one of those wood-covered hills which he had often admired, a splendid mansion was erected under his own superintendence, whose beautiful Corinthian portico and tasteful decorations were the theme of praise among all the lovers of art; the former especially being still regarded as unrivalled in English architecture. Here Ralph retired about middle life, leaving the field of active industry to younger and more needy aspirants: here also he gathered round him the most polished society of that fashionable neighbourhood, and many of the authors, the purchase of whose works had once astonished his mother. Mr Allen is well known to all conversant with the literature of those times as its judicious and munificent patron, and, in particular, as the attached friend of the somewhat irritable poet, Alexander Pope, and the philosophic Bishop Warburton.

The facts of his story, though not so generally known, belong to real life, and are verified by his contempo-

raries. Prior Park has now become a Catholic college; but its romantic situation and fine Corinthian columns are still reckoned among the attractions of the district; and they offer a lesson of how much may be achieved by well-directed energy and persevering prudence.

NATURAL HISTORY OF THE DRAGON.

THE fate of the dragon is curious. Used as a figure by the Jewish prophets, and by one of the evangelists; celebrated by the poets of profane antiquity; assumed by the mediæval romancers as their chief stock villain; condemned by the wisdom of the moderns to one grave with the 'Gorgons, and Hydras, and Chimeras dire'; then risen anew in the present day, out of the bowels of the earth, to vindicate his own existence, and verify the wildest nightmare of poetry! 'There was a time,' says the author of the *Bridgewater Treatise*, 'when reptiles not only constituted the chief tenants and most powerful possessors of the earth, but extended their dominion also over the waters of the seas; and the annals of their history may be traced back through thousands of years antecedent to that latest point in the progressive stages of animal creation, when the first parents of the human race were called into existence.' . . . 'Persons to whom this subject may now be presented for the first time, will receive with much surprise, perhaps almost with incredulity, such statements as are here advanced. It must be admitted that they at first seem much more like the dreams of fiction and romance, than the sober results of calm and deliberate investigation; but to those who will examine the evidence of facts upon which our conclusions rest, there can remain no more reasonable doubt of the former existence of these strange and curious creatures in the times and places we assign to them, than is felt by the antiquary, who, finding the catacombs of Egypt stored with the mummies of men, and apes, and crocodiles, concludes them to be remains of mammalia and reptiles that have formed part of an ancient population on the banks of the Nile.'

These strange and curious creatures might be called dragons. 'Yes, dragons,' says the author from whose quotation we take the above sentences of Dr Buckland: 'not such as the small, living, winged reptiles that skim from place to place in search of their insect food, relying on their natural parachutes, constructed upon a somewhat safer principle than that of poor Mr Cocking, and rejoicing in the generic name of *Draco*, but downright enormous dragons, with bellies as big as tuns, and bigger—creatures that would not have cared much for Bevis's sword "Morglaye," nor that of the Rhodian Draconicide, nor St George's "Askalon," no, nor the "nothing-at-all" of More of More Hall, even if those worthies could have existed in the pestiferous region in which the said dragons revelled. For in a slough where *calamites* and other gigantic marsh plants, now extinct also, rooted themselves at ease, and reared themselves into a damp jungle; in a dreary bog, to which the undrained Pontine marshes would have been the land of health, was their lair. In such a nauseous quag, wholesome to them, these monsters roared and wallowed: there they growled their horrid loves, and there they made war upon each other—the strong devouring the weak, and the carnivorous "chawing up" the herbivorous in the midst of the wildest convulsions of a nascent world. While this was going on upon what then passed for dry land, great sea-dragons rushed through the waves, or sported on the surface of an ocean, not unlike, as far as the waters were concerned, our own; while flying-dragons

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hovered, like Shakespeare's *witches*, through the fog and the filthy air.*

Amongst dragons, those of the sea deserve the precedence, for in all probability they existed first. There are two types well known to geologists—the *ichthyosaurus* and *plesiosaurus*; the former of which was sometimes thirty feet in length, with an eye larger than a man's head. This creature must have presented the appearance of a large predatory abdominal fish, with a head occasionally six feet long, jaws of corresponding size, armed with shark-like teeth, a short neck, and a long lizard tail. The eye, by means of a movable circle of plates with which it was provided, became a telescope or a microscope, just as the animal desired, and lighted its career amidst tyrannies and dangers by night and by day. The *plesiosaurus* was a worthy comrade of this original. 'To the head of the lizard,' says Dr Buckland, 'it united the teeth of the crocodile; a neck of enormous length, resembling the body of a serpent; a trunk and tail having the proportions of an ordinary quadruped; the ribs of a chameleon; and the paddles of a whale.' The great length of the former dragon was in the tail: in this it was in the neck. 'That it was aquatic,' reasons the Rev. W. Conybeare, 'is evident from the form of its paddles; that it was marine, is almost equally so from the remains with which it is universally associated; that it may have occasionally visited the shore, the resemblance of its extremities to those of the turtle may lead us to conjecture: its motion, however, must have been very awkward on land; its long neck must have impeded its progress through the water; presenting a striking contrast to the organisation which so admirably fits the *ichthyosaurus* to cut through the waves. May it not, therefore, be concluded (since, in addition to these circumstances, its respiration must have required frequent access of air), that it swam upon, or near the surface, arching back its long neck like a swan, and occasionally darting it down at the fish which happened to float within its reach? It may perhaps have lurked in shoal water along the coast, concealed among the sea-weed; and raising its nostrils to a level with the surface from a considerable depth, may have found a secure retreat from the assault of dangerous enemies; while the length and flexibility of its neck may have compensated for the want of strength in its jaws, and its incapacity for swift motion through the water, by the suddenness and agility of the attack which they enabled it to make on every animal fitted for its prey which came within its reach.' Besides these denizens of the deep, there was the prototype of the *Monitor*, a gigantic lizard—sometimes five feet in length—which haunts the marshes and river-sides of warm countries. The marine ancestor of this creature must have reached the length of twenty-five feet, with a head four feet long. It was of the size of a grampus, with four paddles instead of legs, a great oar-like tail, and jaws and teeth entirely draconian.

Such were the sea-dragons in those ages of the world compared with which the antiquity of recorded time is but as yesterday. The dry land, or what passed for such, had quite as interesting a population. 'If, with the eyes of the imagination,' says Mr Broderip, 'aided by the lights afforded by the strata and the ancient inhabitants buried therein, we look back upon our earth when the forms of crocodilian reptiles first came upon it, we may picture to ourselves an oozy, spongy, reeky land, watered with wild rivers, and largely overspread by a vast expanse of lakes, on whose dreary, slimy banks gigantic crocodiles reposed amid enormous extinct bog-plants, or floated, log-like, in the fenny sunshine on their waters, while the silence of the desolate

scene was broken by the clank of their monstrous jaws, as they ever and anon closed upon the bygone generations of fishes, or by the growlings and explosions of the distant volcano.' Of the land monsters, the *iguodon* was an elephantine reptile, twenty-eight feet long—a sort of innocent dragon, who made use of his grinders in the mere mastication of vegetable food; while his brother, the *megalosaurus*, a little larger; and a little more tun-like in form, crushed crocodiles and tortoises within his horrid jaws. The two tribes of herbivorous and carnivorous Titans must have fought bitterly for the championship.

While such creatures as these enjoyed the dominion of the land and sea, another class floated heavily through the foggy air. The fossil remains of the pterodactyle formed for some time a puzzle for geologists, who perhaps considered that the announcement of flying-dragons would be carrying their wonders a little too far. Cuvier, however, settled the question; and Dr Buckland accounts for the difference of opinion that prevailed by the presence of characters in the fossil, apparently belonging to each of the three classes to which it was referred. These characters are indicated by the bird-like head and neck—the wing like that of the bat—and the body and tail approaching to those of the mammal. 'These characters,' says Dr Buckland, 'connected with the small skull, as is usual among reptiles, and a beak furnished with not less than sixty pointed teeth, presented a combination of apparent anomalies, which it was reserved for the genius of Cuvier to reconcile. In his hands, this apparently monstrous production of the ancient world has been converted into one of the most beautiful examples ever afforded by comparative anatomy of the harmony that pervades all nature in the adaptation of the same parts of the animal frame to infinitely-varied conditions of existence.' Mr Broderip supposes this chimera to have shuffled along the ground after the manner of a bat, and scuttled through the water when it had occasion to swim. When rising into the heavy air, the membranous wing was expanded by the bones of the fore-foot; and when tired, it perhaps suspended itself by the hind-legs. 'The general hue of the body was probably lurid, and the texture of the skin shagreen-like, resembling in some degree the external tegument of a chameleon or guana, excepting the smooth membrane of the wing.'

Such were the dragons of the primeval world; and one could almost suppose that among the buried learning of the earlier nations there lurked some knowledge of geology, seeing how their ideas about dragons come to such a conformity in some respects with the realities of these pre-Adamite reptiles. It is strange that the poets, in their descriptions of the *leviathan*, which is concluded to have been the crocodile, should approach nearer to the real dragon-type than the crocodile itself! They have been ultra-liberal, it is true, in the articles of heads, crests, manes, and beards; but in all essential particulars they were as correct as a modern professor, who can not only number their bones, but measure their muscular development, describe their organs of sense and motion, and ascertain even the colour and quantity of their blood. The *Lernean hydra*, slain by Hercules, is placed by the ancients in its proper habitat—the mud and quagmires consequent on Deucalion's deluge: for the sake of this *fact*, its heads, varying in number, according to different authorities, from seven to a hundred, may be pardoned. These modern dragons are represented to have fed on vipers and scorpions, thus increasing their natural venom at every meal. A peculiar species of dragon kindled the air it breathed into flames; and the crowned basilisk, the terror of both men and dragons, destroyed animal life with a glance of its eye. The dragons of the marshes were said to be so large, that they killed elephants with ease. One that haunted the neighbourhood of Damascus was 140 feet long; and the intestines of another, 120 feet long, were preserved in the library of Constantinople, with the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* written upon it in letters of gold!

* Zoological Recreations. By W. J. Broderip, Esq., F.R.S. Colburn. 1847.

The scalds of the north, and romancers of the south, vied with each other in illustrating the popular idea; and in our own country more especially, 'nobody was anybody,' as Mr Broderip says, 'who had not slain his dragon.' The following is a portrait of the monster in Syr Bevis of Hampton:—

'When the dragon, that foule is,
Had a syght of Syr Bevis,
He cast up a loud cry,
As it had thundered in the sky:
He turned his body towards the son;
It was greater than any tonne:
His scales were brighter than the glas,
And harder they were than any bras:
Between his shoulder and his tayle,
Was forty fote without fayle.'

The combat of Syr Bevis and this wonderful wildfowl is supposed to be the prototype of that of St George and the Dragon.

Turning from the dragon of the old romance, we come to that of Spenser's Faery Queen, 'with its "wynges-like sayls, cruel-rending claws, yron teeth, and breath of smothering smoke and sulphur;" and then to that most striking passage in the Pilgrim's Progress, descriptive of the battle between Christian and Apollyon, who spake like a dragon, and when at last, says Bunyan in his dream, Christian gave him a deadly thrust, "spread forth his dragon's wings, and sped him away that I saw him no more."

Dragons, however, at length met the fate of the knights that slew them, and were put out of countenance by ridicule. The Dragon of Wantley was more fatal to them than the basilisk; and after the exploit of More of More Hall, the whole brood appears to sink into the earth, and disappear, like their ancestors of the pre-Adamite world.

'The Dragon of Wantley churches ate
(He used to come of a Sunday),
Whole congregations were to him
A dish of Salmagundi.
Parsons were his black puddings, and
Pat aldermen his capons,
And his tit-bit the collection plate,
Brimful of Birmingham halfpence.
The corporation worshipful
He valued not an ace;
But swallowed the mayor, asleep in his chair,
And picked his teeth with the mace.'

The pre-Adamite reptiles, although extinct in their species, are not wholly so in their genera. There is still a lizard called the ambyrhynchus, which may be said to represent, however poorly and inadequately, the sea-dragons of the primeval world. It is a hideous-looking creature, as described by Darwin, from three to four feet long, of a dirty black colour, stupid and sluggish in its movements. 'When in the water, the animal swims, with perfect ease and quickness, by a serpentine movement of its body and flattened tail, the legs, during this time, being motionless, and closely collapsed on its sides. A seaman on board sank one with a heavy weight attached to it, thinking thus to kill it directly; but when, an hour afterwards, he drew up the line, the lizard was quite active. Their limbs and strong claws are admirably adapted for crawling over the rugged and fissured masses of lava which everywhere form the coast. In such situations, a group of six or seven of these hideous reptiles may oftentimes be seen on the black rocks, a few feet above the surf, basking in the sun with outstretched legs.'

We must not forget, however, another claimant—though Mr Broderip does—the sea-serpent—which grows more and more important every day. The last affidavit on the subject, given in the March number of the 'Zoologist,' is from a certain Joseph Woodward, captain of the Adamant schooner of Hingham, who states that he fired one of the ship's guns, loaded with a cannon-ball and musket-bullets, at the monster, himself and crew hearing the shot strike against his body, from which they rebounded as if it had been a rock. Cap-

tain Woodward reports the creature to have been about 130 feet in length, of a blackish colour, and with ear-holes about twelve feet from the extremity of his head. Another 'well-authenticated' report was made in 1833 by five gentlemen of Halifax, Nova Scotia, chiefly officers of the rifle brigade. The creature they saw was between 80 and 100 feet long; the neck was equal in girth to a moderate-sized tree; and that and the head of a dark-brown, or nearly black colour, streaked irregularly with white. In 1845 and 1846, the serpent-seers of the firds of Norway describe the animal as being from 40 to 100 feet long; and what is very curious, he is invariably provided with a mane like a horse. This mane is a remarkable feature in the *fabulous* dragons of the middle ages! Dr Cogswell, in the 'Zoologist,' points out a strong resemblance between the extinct plesiosaurus, and the descriptions of the sea-serpent as given by unlettered persons; and he concludes that the argument *pro* and *contra* is satisfactory in favour of at least a suspension of judgment on the subject.

The great crocodile of the Ganges represents in some degree the amphibious dragons; but the iguanodon (the herbivorous dragon) has dwindled into the small iguana, five feet in length. The geographical distribution of the guanas extends over a great part of South America and the West India islands. Although they occasionally eat eggs and insects in a wild state, and in captivity have been known to feed on the entrails of fowls, their ordinary food consists of buds, leaves, flowers, and fruits, for the cropping of which their numerous teeth, which may be compared to small lancets, terminating in broad blades, with minutely-serrated edges, are admirably adapted. As this diet leads the guana to the trees, both form and colour conjoin to aid in securing its safety; the first enabling it to climb and stand firm on the branches, and the second going far towards concealing it in its leafy haunt. The long, slender, serrated, sharp-clawed toes, and lengthened flexible tail, here come into play; and the green, bluish, or slaty hue of the upper part of the body, together with the yellowish-green or brownish of the under parts, harmonise with its situation. Sometimes there are brown stripes or yellow-edged zig-zags on the sides of the body; sometimes there is an oblique yellow line on the forepart of the shoulder; some are dotted with brown, the limbs of others are mottled with brown on a blackish ground, and the tail is generally annulated with alternate large brown and green or yellowish rings. These variations are, however, in strict keeping with its sylvan habits. . . . These animals are oviparous: their eggs are round, with a thinner shell, or rather tegument—for it is tough, not brittle—than that of those of the common poultry, but with a white and yolk resembling that of a hen's egg in flavour. Nor is this the only delicacy supplied by the uncouth-looking guanas. They become very fat upon their wholesome diet, and are much sought after for their flesh, which is as white as that of a chicken, and equal, if not superior to it, when properly offered to the palate. The old authors confine their cookery to boiling and frying: thus Piao says that they love to feed on fruits and eggs, whence they derive much fat, and the whitish flesh "*quæ elixa vel frigida inter delicias expetitur, nec gallinæ pullis cedit.*" Dr Patrick Brown relates in his history of Jamaica, that he kept a guana about the house for two months without ever having observed it eat.

As for the flying-dragons, they have passed utterly away, for it can scarcely be said that they are represented in the little insect-eating parachuted reptile which bears this name. 'Pterodactyles have been succeeded by birds—ichthyosaurs, plesiosaurs, mosasaurs, and the like, by whales, dolphins, and great fishes. Where the herbivorous iguanodon revelled, the ox, the deer, and the sheep quietly crop the fragrant herbage; whilst in place of the destructive megalosaurus, the carnivorous mammalia keep down the excessive multiplication of the ruminants; and MAN has a dominion over all. In future ages, his remains will fill the bosom of

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the earth; and the traveller in some far distant century will feel the full force of Byron's lines wherever he sets his foot:—

'Stop!—for thy tread is on an empire's dust!
An earthquake's spoil is sepulchred below!'

THE ENGLISH IN BORNEO.

SINCE the publication of Captain Keppel's late work, an outline of the contents of which we presented to our readers in Nos. 116 and 117, we have looked forward with much interest to the appearance of other portions of Mr Brooke's Journals. We have them now before us;* and a brief digest of the varied matter contained in the volumes may perhaps prove not uninteresting.

In January 1840, Mr Brooke visited the great and unexplored island of Celebes, for the purpose of collecting information concerning its strange laws, its almost everlasting internal dissensions, its populous and wealthy cities, its great rivers, its fertile and untraversed plains and unascended hills, and its huge natural caverns. He had much to contend with, but also much to gain. Rumours of his proceedings in another part of the Twelve Thousand Islands had no doubt reached the ears of the rulers, and the people of Celebes. It was a good thing, therefore, for him to show himself to them. A taste for European manners and European civilisation may hereafter spring up there; and if such prove to be the case, we shall attribute the sowing of the first seeds to the visit of the adventurous English traveller.

The Bugis or natives of Celebes are a strange race. Though those continually dwelling on shore are, on the whole, somewhat addicted to laziness, the traders are among the most adventurous and spirited of the inhabitants of the Archipelago. Their mercantile pursuits necessarily bring them into contact with almost all the other islanders; and while distributing the commodities of trade among the various islands, they must at the same time disseminate ideas; and if those ideas were the fruit of an intercourse with the civilised races of the West, the effect could not fail to prove beneficial. But treachery and avarice, those debasing qualities common to almost all nations in the dark stages of their existence, but more especially at the period when the first dim dawn of a better state of things is breaking upon them, are widely diffused. An instance of the atrocious extent to which kidnapping is carried in Celebes is related. 'A follower of the Rajah Kerain, who had assumed the character of a physician, came to the house of a relative of the nahodah; and after sitting some time in converse with the lady of the house, said, "I wish you would let some one carry my bundle to Nepoh, whither I am going." (Nepoh was three miles off.) The poor woman immediately said, "My nephew shall do it for you;" and the boy (about ten years of age) went with the pretended physician, as was thought, to Nepoh. Some days, however, elapsing, and the boy not coming back, his aunt grew uneasy; and setting some inquiries on foot, found that the man whom he had gone with was at Tempé. On being applied to, the miscreant coolly replied that the boy came back the same evening; the real fact being, that he had sold him as a slave, no one knew where. Under these circumstances, the nahodah applied to me to use my influence with the datu lampola, in order to recover the boy;

and I immediately applied to him, and received the fullest assurance that, if the boy was alive, he should be found. A week, however, passing, and no news being obtained, I renewed my instances more warmly; and urged that if the man would not disclose what he had done with the boy, he ought to be put in confinement. Such plain-dealing appeared, however, to be altogether out of the question, for he was a follower of the Arn Kerain! On farther inquiry, I learned that the very rascal who had stolen and sold the boy, had been sent to repurchase him with twenty-five reals of the datu's money.'

The boy was thus restored to his friends at the cost of L.4, 3s. 4d., which came out of the magistrate's pocket. The anecdote speaks expressively of the present state of affairs in Celebes, where a criminal must be bribed to make restitution for the wrongs he has done.

In an excursion which Mr Brooke undertook shortly after, in company with several rajahs and other important personages, he fell in with what he terms 'a cynical king, and his no less cynical mistress.' These were the king and queen of Akutaingan. Invested with all the power and dignity of royalty, his highness's fondness for the chase led him to despise all other occupations. He, therefore, abandoning his palace, delighted to dwell in forest or jungle, hunting the wild deer on horseback, with his young and beautiful wife constantly at his side. This lady appears to have been quite in her proper element when thus employed. Horses, dogs, and fighting cocks were her most familiar pets, and with them she loved to scour the woods and plains, along with her husband, whom Mr Brooke describes as partaking of the generosity of the horse and the sagacity of the dog. Our countryman says he is sure the pretty huntress of Akutaingan was intended for a better and a happier fate. We doubt whether she could have been happier. She had a kind lord, and was never in want of an agreeable pipe of opium. Furthermore, she had no idea of any other life, and therefore wished not for any change. How could her domestic felicity have been greater?

Here, in company with this hunting chief, Mr Brooke partook of the 'Feast of the Bloody Heart,' which to us seems, to say the least of it, a wild and barbarous custom, though the English traveller declares there is nothing revolting in it, not so much as in the practice of devouring oysters. Our readers shall judge. 'The game being killed, chillies, salt, and limes (always carried to the field) are brought, the heart taken out, and with portions of the liver and inside of the thigh, is minced and eaten raw with these ingredients, the sauce being blood!'

Having heard many extraordinary accounts of the great cave of Mampo, which the natives declared to have been the work of a dynasty of kings long in the grave, Mr Brooke underwent many fatigues in order to inspect it. As might have been foretold, however, it proved to be no artificial production. The first glimpse of the interior showed that time, and the accidents of nature, had been the only architects of the wonderful cavern of Mampo. It was not at all extraordinary, however, that the ignorant and credulous inhabitants should have believed it to have been the vestige of an ancient religion, since Mr Brooke compares it with the far-famed halls of Alhambra. On entering, a vast chamber, adorned with countless pillars of the most dazzling white material, presented itself to his gaze. The roof glittered with pendent stalactites of all shapes and sizes, sometimes connected by exquisitely delicate fretwork, while here and there, where crevices in the rocky flooring afforded earth and moisture, groups of young trees sprung up, and received on their heads the weight of innumerable green creepers falling in from holes in the roof, and twining in every direction

* Narrative of Events in Borneo, from the Private Journals of James Brooke, Esq., with a Narrative of Operations in H.M.S. Iris. By Captain Rodney Mundy, R.N. London: Murray.

about the cavern, which runs deep into the bowels of the mountain. We can scarcely imagine a more striking spectacle than that which must have presented itself at the time of Mr Brooke's visit. The hundreds of dusky figures with flaming torches, the mass of green creepers, whose dark, rich foliage contrasted admirably with the pure whiteness of the rest, and the varied and fantastic forms which the hand of nature had there moulded, combined to produce a picture in the highest degree exciting to the imagination.

On our countryman's return to Sarawak, he found the province in so distracted a condition, with no probability of any termination of the period of anarchy, that thoughts of throwing up his schemes for the regeneration of the Archipelago, in utter despair, more than once occurred to his mind. The natural vigour of his character, however, triumphed over despondency, and he resolved to persevere. Soon after this, the rebellion occurred, which he assisted in putting down. The details, however, have been given to the public some months ago, and we have therefore no need to repeat them here.

Having seen much of the island of Borneo, its cities, its rivers, its productions, vegetable and mineral, its animals of all kinds, from the ponderous elephant to the creeping lizard; and hearing of its ancient trade in camphor, tortoiseshell, sandal-wood, cloves, bark, birds'-nests, and trepang, Mr Brooke determined at all hazards to make an effort to open its inestimable riches to the enterprise of the merchant. Convinced that every province, and Sarawak in particular, might prove a mine of wealth, if properly worked, he thought no pains too great to be bestowed on the attempt, and therefore set about examining the materials with which he was to commence the gigantic labour.

He found the inhabitants uncivilised and ignorant. They had been accustomed, since time forgotten, to bloody and barbarous practices—murder, robbery, treachery, and almost every other vice. Yet they possess a religion, dark and imperfect though it be, founded on the original bases of all faith; one great God dwelling above the clouds, a future state of bliss for the good—the happy hunting-ground of the American Indians—and a place of punishment for the wicked.

Their religion, however, did not teach them to avoid the shedding of blood. Until very recently, the Dyaks of Sarawak indulged in the propensity of head-taking, which depopulated the land, interfered with the cultivation of the soil, and precluded the possibility of the different tribes living in amity one with another. The custom, however, has withered before the breath of European civilisation. No one now thinks of appropriating the heads of his neighbours, since Mr Brooke has declared that life for life shall be the law of Sarawak, and has caused it to be felt that he will be obeyed.

Piracy, however, has always been the greatest bane of progress in the Indian islands. Mr Brooke has devoted himself with unwearied energy to assist in its suppression, and we hope soon to see the fruits of his labours. The first active affair of very great consequence related in the present work, is the triumph over a notorious piratical chief, one Budrudeen. To prevent unnecessary loss of life, it was resolved to seize him by stratagem. He had long ago, by innumerable atrocities, repeated in the very teeth of warning, forfeited the right of being treated as an honourable enemy. Brooke's ally 'arrived at Singé; I found the patinge (Mr Brooke's ally) waiting till the pangeran (Budrudeen) and the Illanun panglima (his partner in crime) came to the beach; and to prevent suspicion, my party kept close in the boat, whence I could observe what was passing without. The pangeran and Illanun walked down, both well armed, and the latter dressed out with a variety of charms. Once on the beach, retreat was impossible; for our people surrounded them, though without committing any hostile act. The suspicion of the two was, however, roused; and it was curious to

observe their different demeanour. The Borneo pangeran remained quiet, silent, and motionless—a child might have taken him; the Magindanas Illanun lashed himself to desperation. Flourishing his spear in one hand, and with the other on the handle of his sword, he defied those collected about him. He danced his war-dance on the sand; his face became deadly pale; his wild eyes glared; he was ready to die, but not to die alone. His time was come, for he was dangerous, and to catch him was impossible; and accordingly Patirgiali, walking past, leaped forward, and struck a spear through his back far between his shoulders, half a foot out at his breast. I had no idea that, after such a thrust, a man could even for a few instants exert himself; but the Illanun, after receiving his mortal wound, dashed forward with his spear, and thrust it at the breast of another man; but strength and life failed, and the weapon did not enter.

Among the varied and novel matters contained in this volume, we have a history of Borneo, a description of all its known provinces, towns, rivers, and natural peculiarities; its various tribes, piratical and peaceful; the extent of its capabilities of producing articles of commerce; its gold, diamond, antimony, silver, and other mines; the manners, customs, religion, &c. of its people; and indeed a collection of useful and interesting facts, such as seldom come within the scope of one work. If our readers would learn all that is told in Mr Brooke's Journals, they must read them in their complete form. It is, however, wonderful that the English rajah could have devoted so much time to the collecting of information, multifarious and fatiguing as must have been his duties. Here is a slight sketch of his routine of daily life when at Sarawak:—My spare hours are devoted to the studying of languages, reading, and chart-making; and my companions are constantly employed—some stuffing animals and birds, others in teaching our young Bugis and Dyak youths their letters, and instructing them in copying my vocabularies. Nine is the breakfast hour; four the time for dinner; after which we stroll out till dark, and drink tea at eight. Of wine and grog we have none, and I believe we are all the better without it, retiring happily to our beds about ten, ready for that repose which will fit us for the labour of to-morrow. I have also been engaged in watching some of the head men amusing themselves at chess, which is a favourite game among them.

But Mr Brooke has also his country-house, situated on the border of a beautiful river, rattling through a stony channel, and overhung with the boughs of magnificent trees, whose dark foliage, meeting at top, only admits a few subdued sun-rays, thus preserving coolness and shade on the waters even in the heat of a tropical day. On every side extends a sweep of richly-cultivated country, across which the stream meanders, its course marked now by a barrier of low rocks, and now by banks covered with extra-luxuriant vegetation. Santah Cottage stands on a moderately-lofty eminence on the river's edge. It consists of two storeys built with logs, entwined with split bamboo. A small farm of three acres lies behind it, which Mr Brooke has cleared of wood and jungle, and planted with a thousand nutmeg-trees, with some figs, to which he intends to add the coffee-tree and the betel nut.

Half a mile from this beautiful retreat another cottage is to be built, on a spot called the Fairy Knoll. Here a diamond mine is to be worked, the Santah river abounding in these precious stones. 'The diamonds are found mixed in the gravelly substratum, and there is likewise a small quantity of gold to be obtained. The earth is washed at the water's edge in large, round, wooden pans, shaped like shields; the diamonds are picked out, and there remains a residue of black sand like gunpowder and gold particles; of course a good deal of neatness and attention is requisite, and the workers seem jealous and superstitious, dislike noise, particularly laughter or merriment, as it is highly

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offensive to the spirit who presides over the diamonds; and what is perhaps more important in their eyes, the diamonds cannot be found if the abode of quiet is disturbed by unholy mirth. It is surprising to see people calling themselves Mohammedans yielding to Pagan rites of presenting offerings to the spirit of the mine—the gnome king: fowls, rice, curi, are weekly offered; but I was pleased to hear that they are sensible enough to eat up these good things after they have been offered. Hajji Ibrahim, with a solemn face, requested me to give him an old letter, and he engraved thereon some Chinese characters two inches long, which, being translated, signify, "Rajah Muda Hassim, James Brooke, and Hajji Ibrahim, present their compliments to the spirit, and request his permission to work at the mine."

Such are Mr Brooke's rural residences, whither he retires when weary of the bustle and activity of his capital. His bungalow at Sarawak* is of a more imposing character. Built upon piles in the native style, and thatched with nipa, with a large veranda embracing the four sides, its interior yet presents all the characteristic comforts of an English dwelling. Landing at a little boat-house on the bank, you proceed up a broad gravelled walk, bordered by dense hedgerows of jessamine, to the porch; you then ascend a short flight of steps, cross the broad veranda, and enter a spacious saloon, or hall of reception, forty feet long. Adjoining this is a library, stocked with a choice assortment of the literature of various countries, and supplied also from time to time with the latest publications, periodical and others, on geographical and scientific subjects. Two bedrooms complete the interior arrangements of this curious mansion—half European and half Eastern. A kitchen, various offices, and bath-rooms, constitute detached buildings, at a very few yards' distance, while in close proximity stands a neat cottage, devoted to the purposes of hospitality.

Sarawak town is situated on the river of the same name, in a picturesque and fertile country. The native houses are built on either side of two beautiful reaches, while the Chinese occupy a distinct quarter on the right bank, opposite the English residences, which stand on eminences on the left.

The military defences of Sarawak consist of a fort or battery mounting six guns, and garrisoned by twenty-five Malay soldiers! This formidable detachment is quartered in barracks adjoining the fort. Each man receives six Spanish dollars per month, with a certain ration of provisions per diem.

With this imposing force Mr Brooke reigns over an extensive territory, whose capital contains a population of 14,000 inhabitants. This might not appear so extraordinary, were the people a meek, submissive, and domestic race, nurtured for generations in the lap of peace, and accustomed to the varied arts of industry. On the contrary, anarchy has been for ages the normal state of the country; strife, and consequent bloodshed, have unremittingly urged on the work of depopulation; every man's hand has been against every man; destruction and pillage were the constant employments of the people; and no one knew or thought of peace. But a change has been wrought in the condition of affairs—a change which we should have considered incredible, had it been prophesied five years ago. What the next five years may bring forth it is impossible to foresee. If events, however, advance as steadily as they have done, and in the same direction, we hope to see a colony flourishing at Sarawak, factories in busy operation, steam-engines in full play, houses and streets built, and gardens laid out, and also an English church for those Europeans and natives who are inclined to attend it. This may or may not happen. The future is the future, and none may read it. If, however, any colony founded by an individual possessed of the requisite energy and ability ever flourished, Sarawak ought to

flourish. Mr Brooke, we feel assured, will prove true to the task he has undertaken, and we therefore entertain brilliant hopes of the onward progress of the English in Sarawak.

THE OPPOSITE HOUSE.

A DWELLER in one of the prettiest districts of suburban London, but often yearning for the freedom and retirement of the country, I yet endeavour, as the common saying runs, 'to make the best of things in general'—that is, by living as much apart as propriety will admit from the gossiping society usually found to preponderate in such places, and also by being intimately acquainted with all the hidden nooks, odd corners, and green dells within reach, where the early primrose and violets hide, and where the latest acorn drops.

The changes which have taken place in the 'opposite house' have often afforded me matter for contemplation during the past seven years, the more so, perhaps, because I visited there a long time ago, when, as an only and spoiled child, I was taken about everywhere with one who is now a saint in heaven; for which reason the memories and ideas thus associated assume with me somewhat of a sad and touching character.

The two elderly maiden sisters who were then the occupants I shall designate as the Misses Ramsay. They were rather aristocratic in their connections and pretensions; and it was considered something desirable to be admitted into the exclusive, but exquisitely dull circle, occasionally assembled in their prim drawing-room. I believe nothing save old friendship and family ties would have induced them to tolerate me in this model sanctuary, 'children and dogs' being especially prohibited, and objects of their supreme dread and aversion.

There was nothing I disliked so much as a visit to the Misses Ramsay; yet rather than be left out, or separated from my mother's side, I preferred encountering the heavy penance; and truth to tell, they were very kind in their way, fondly stroked my flowing curls as I sat on the huge foot-stool at their feet, while in gentle whispers they courteously hinted that I must be careful not to run up against the tiny tables, with their spider legs, on which rested the antique fairy cups and saucers of peerless china. Their establishment consisted of five domestics, all old retainers, and as precise and orderly as their ladies. First in importance, as majordomo of the establishment, came Benjamin the footman, a tall, gaunt man, with gray hairs, and a long solemn visage, who always appeared habited in an immaculate black suit, with silver shoe-buckles. A thoroughly respectable, though stern-looking domestic was Benjamin; and when, with staid and important demeanour, he came from beneath the porch (where bowering clematis and honeysuckle were kept within strict bounds) to unlock the little green gate through which alone visitors were admitted, wo to the careless individuals who failed to duly scrape and brush their shoes if polluted by contact with mother earth! The vinegar aspect became sourer and harsher, and unquestionable demonstrations of displeasure peculiar to himself, but well understood by those who knew him, evinced the wrath of the worthy Benjamin, and rendered it no pleasant matter to provoke it. The housemaid was his sister, and distinguished by the same undeviating severity of attire and bearing; though certainly, to judge from the neatness and shining cleanliness of the house (which, however, was far too neat and minutely arranged to afford an idea of use or comfort), she was the perfection of good housemaids, not to be had now-a-days for love or money.

The ladies each kept her own peculiar attendant—fac-similes of themselves. The cook of this clockwork establishment was of course invisible; and I never knew more than one person who had dined there, the entertainment being always limited to what is vulgarly termed 'tea and turn-out.' The dinner-hour was at

* For a representation and description of this place, see 'Views in the Indian Archipelago,' by James Augustus St John.

four o'clock to a moment; and our poor friend, who came from a distance, and was unavoidably asked to remain and partake of the repast, whispered to my mother, at our hospitable though far rougher board, 'that if dining off silver and porcelain was enough for satisfaction, there was a profusion of that at the Misses Ramsay's, and to spare; but in other respects it was a Barmecide's feast.'

Tea was handed round at seven precisely—visitors being never waited for. Tea did I say? it was an anomaly in the state of things—old maids being proverbially famed for their renovating hyson; but with the Misses Ramsay it was literally *wash*—never made in the room, but handed about to the guests on massive silver salvers, together with a very small portion of delicately-sliced bread and butter. I never dared to partake of the untempting beverage; for Benjamin and his worthy sister, Mrs Deborah, looked down so awfully upon me, that I usually felt paralysed, sat demurely still, and was thankful to be pronounced 'a well-behaved young lady now.' Little did our entertainers guess the outrageous romp I was privately contemplating for the next morning, as an indemnification for present thralldom.

A card-table was then put out, and a whist party formed, the remainder of the guests being left to their own discretion. At half-past nine enter Benjamin and Mrs Deborah again, with the silver salvers now supporting tiny but superbly-cut wine-glasses, each containing a drop or two of wine, while a golden basket held the small modicum of rich cake, divided into minute portions. By this time I was perfectly ravenous, not daring to cast my eyes on the tempting mouthfuls, but eagerly listening for the welcome announcement, at ten minutes to ten, of 'Your chair is waiting, madam.'

Yet strange to say, people always went to the Misses Ramsay's when they were asked; and one redeeming point there was—at all seasons, and at all times, a small but rare collection of the fairest and daintiest flowers shed their perfumed loveliness over the inhospitable stiffness of that cold drawing-room: their scent still haunts me with the associations of my childhood.

The Misses Ramsay gave large sums unostentatiously away in charities both public and private; and many poor of the neighbourhood had cause to lament their decease, which took place within a few months of each other, and a year or two previously to our being domiciled in our present residence.

How changed the outward aspect now of the 'opposite house'—even as changed as its hidden domesticity! A merchant, reputed to be prosperous, had taken the lease, and brought thither his wife, a lady of Swiss extraction, and a large family of children, of all ages, from twelve downwards.

These children were singularly beautiful, though formed on a large scale of robust healthfulness; their feet springing step, agile frames, and well-proportioned figures, betokened pure mountain descent; while their fanciful costume (the talk and wonder of the amazed neighbourhood), as Swiss peasant boys and girls, with fancy-looking caps and gay streamers, bright jackets, laced bodices, and such short petticoats, &c. all combined to make the illusion so perfect, that, as I watched them sporting under the old trees, I often fancied a scene in some theatrical representation was before me. I had never entered the interior of the house since the days of my childhood, when the Misses Ramsay occupied it; but if the exterior was a true index as to its condition, report spoke truly when it said, that on the departure of the Swiss family it was found to be literally torn to pieces. The clematis and honeysuckle have never been visible again; all the flowers were trampled down; for the children's little carriages, drawn by pet goats, completed their destruction.

Carpenters appeared to be in constant requisition; broken chairs and tables were observed to be carried out for repairs; dilapidated blinds and smashed panes of glass afforded continual employment to glaziers and Venetian shade manufacturers. The foreign mother

appeared to be entirely devoted to the whims and caprices of her offspring, to the utter shutting out of all other human sympathies; indeed the scandal-mongers of the neighbourhood hinted, that had his home been better regulated, and more comfortably managed, the merchant would not so frequently have absented himself from it: hence disagreements arose; misfortunes in business came; and at length there was a total 'break up.' The elder children were sent by their English relatives to school, prior to their mother's returning to Switzerland with the younger ones, until arrangements could be made, or unanimity restored. The parting appeared to be a terrific one, and finished at the gate, and outside of it, as the carriage stood ready to convey the weeping children from the home they were never to return to again. The girls were dressed in plain English habiliments, and their close cottage-bonnets scarcely permitted the ruddy cheeks, now bedewed with tears, to be visible; the large hands clasped their frantic mother's neck, and the huge feet fondly lingered on that beloved threshold where so many happy memories twined around their young hearts. I never heard what became of them; but a kind of desolation appeared to reign on the final departure of the family.

The shut-up house, its ruinous condition, and its garden choked with weeds, rendered it a melancholy object from our windows; and we were heartily wishing that some eligible housekeeper would take a fancy to it, ere the winter set in, when one morning an array of brick-layers, painters, and paper-hangers made their appearance, and in a short time the 'opposite house' looked habitable once more; but still its general aspect was not cheerful, for the blinds were all sad-coloured, the paint was dark and dingy-looking, and the fore-court was entirely covered with gravel, all intruding branches being mercilessly lopped. A lady and gentleman in sad-coloured garments became the owners; and though, altogether, things looked as cold and prim as they did in the Misses Ramsay's time, yet they wanted a certain relief and elegance which reigned then, and which is not definable.

The gentleman was a dissenting minister, who, having a handsome private fortune, conducted his ministrations from a sense of duty. He and his wife were benevolence personified. They were never done admonishing, instructing, cheering; they fed the hungry, clothed the naked, and they were never known to make any difference in their charities on the score of religious distinction. A time came when these excellent persons also removed from the 'opposite house,' much to the grief of the neighbourhood. They emigrated to New Zealand, possibly for the sake of labouring in a wider field of usefulness—carrying tidings of the blessed Gospel to scenes of heathen barbarism. If such really were their object, what an example of self-devotedness! I wonder if their thoughts ever revert to the neat English cottage, with its suburban accessories!

Once again the 'opposite house' was inhabited, and this time by a perfect colony of busy bees. A rich and pious lady of the vicinity purchased it for her charity school; and thirty orphan girls, in their pretty uniforms, here found a refuge from the present ills of life, and help and instruction to enable them to combat with those in store for their maturer years. Busy, clean, and happy creatures they appeared to be; and though it was pronounced, by many of the neighbours, to be shameful and impertinent of Lady M.—to put so genteel a cottage villa to such an unseemly use, yet there were some who deemed it far otherwise. The school-room was that which had formerly been the Misses Ramsay's drawing-room. Poor ladies! how impossible it would have been for them to have imagined that no less than thirty of their forbidden torments, in the guise of robust charity girls, would one day be daily assembled there—that battledoors and skipping-ropes would usurp the place of the delicate embroidery frame—while numberless torn and well-thumbed spelling-

books, and 'readings-made-easy,' would take the place of 'Harvey's Meditations' and 'Blair's Sermons,' in their richly-embossed morocco covers and untarnished gilt-edged brightness. For not quite twelve months did the orphan girls enjoy their pleasant home. Lady M—— died suddenly, the school was broken up, and the house has been empty for more than a year.

Such are the chances and changes I have witnessed, up to the present moment, in the 'opposite house.' But all of us have opposite houses, in whose stones we may read sermons if we choose—and sometimes romances; for human nature, when properly viewed, is never uninteresting or un instructive. Mere empty curiosity, no doubt, is either hateful or absurd; but it is good, for all that, to turn away sometimes from the interior of our hearts and homes, and inquire, in a kindly yet observant spirit, into what is going on in the 'opposite house.'

THE PRECIOUS METALS.

MONEY, in some form or other, has in all time been so intimately associated with the business and pleasure of the world, with the public and private policy of nations and of individuals, as to have engaged the attention of philosophers and legislators, poets and philanthropists, as well as the votaries of the giddy goddess who regard it merely as the vehicle of enjoyment. Whatever the material of which the circulating medium is composed, its potency has varied but little, if at all, from the universal standard. Some people have considered that there was 'nothing like leather,' and impressed a stamp upon bits of hide; others have declared in favour of iron, brass, bronze; in short, all the metals, as they were known, have been legitimatised into currency. In some countries yet unvisited by the schoolmaster, we are told that the natives use bullocks instead of bank-notes, with sheep by way of small change; others, again, recognise only lumps of salt, or shells. Still, as before observed, whatever the material, the conventional currency appears to be everywhere pretty much the same as among our day-book and ledger communities:

— 'The only power
That all mankind falls down before;
Money, that like the swords of kings,
Is the last reason of all things.'

By common consent of all nations who have been able to obtain the precious metals, gold and silver have superseded all other materials of currency—always excepting paper. These occupy so small a space, admitting of being conveniently hoarded and preserved, as to have commended themselves especially to popular instinct in remote and unsettled ages. At the time of the conquest of Persia by the Greeks, the gold accumulated by successive monarchs of that country amounted to about L.80,000,000 sterling. The whole or greater portion of this large sum was transferred to Greece by the victories of Alexander, besides which there were several mines of gold and silver within the Grecian territory. The influx of such enormous wealth would necessarily tell on the manners of the people, and on prices; and accordingly, in the days of Demosthenes, gold and silver were five times less valuable than under Solon. Whatever be the amount circulating in a country, there is a constant tendency towards diminution; the immense accumulations would be widely scattered in foreign wars or intestine convulsions. How great must have been the dispersion of precious metals on the downfall of Rome, and afterwards of Byzantium! From the date of the latter event, down through the middle ages, and even to the present century, large sums have been totally lost, from the practice of burying money for safe keeping, as in many instances the owners died, and carried the secret with them to the tomb. When to these causes is added the loss by shipwreck, and other casualties, the result appears in the magnitude of the diminution. Just before the discovery of America, gold

was at an enormous value, but subject to great and frequent fluctuations.

The amount of coined money circulating in the whole of Europe at the close of the fifteenth century has been estimated at L.34,000,000 sterling. The quantity coined in England in 237 years ending in 1509, was equal to nearly L.7000 annually, present value; but from 1603 to 1829, the average was L.819,415, or 122 times greater than before the supply from the mines of the new world. In addition to the causes of diminution above described, there is the mechanical wear of the money in passing from hand to hand. This loss has been variously estimated: according to Mr McCulloch, it is 1 per cent. per annum. If this be correct, L.40,000,000 coined at the beginning of a century, would be reduced to L.15,000,000 at the end; in two centuries, L.6,000,000 would remain; and in five centuries, about L.300,000 only. Taking Mr Jacob's estimate of the annual wear at 1-360th part, what was L.200,000,000 under Constantine, would be reduced to L.12,000,000 in the time of Edward I.

The discovery of the mines of Potosi, above all other acquisitions made by Europeans in South America, effected an important change in the commercial relations of the old world. Purchasers found it necessary to go to market with more and more money in their hand, such was the progressive increase of prices. To many persons the rise was a source of exultation, but the greater part regarded it with suspicion and discontent: they could not understand why wheat should be doubled, and in some instances quadrupled, in price in the course of a few years. The dissatisfaction was not confined to the poorer classes—it excited attention in higher quarters; and Latimer, in one of his sermons preached before Edward VI. and the court, animadverted upon the change in no very mild terms. In reality, mankind were benefited, not injured, by having more gold than they had before, just as they would be benefited by an increase in the amount of their wardrobes, or growing timber, or any other tangible possession.

The present importations of silver into Europe are about 40 to 1 compared to those of gold. According to all the accounts, we are to see greater changes in the course of a few years, from the influx of the precious metals, than any that have yet been produced. The application of European science and industry to the exploration of the hitherto imperfectly-worked mines of the South American States, will doubtless effect some notable difference in the proceeds. In those countries, wheelbarrows and vehicles for transport are scarcely known, and in most cases mule tracks are the only roads. The workmen generally employed in mining operations possess no other tools or machinery than their ten fingers, a lasso, and a knife. The loss and waste consequent upon such a state of things may be easily imagined. Mercury, as is well known, is an essential element in amalgamations of gold and silver, and in their separation from the ore; the quantity annually required for these purposes by the American mines is about 3,000,000 of pounds. Of this the greater portion is imported; and its transmission into the interior of the country is in the hands of monopolists, by whom the price is raised to so excessive an amount, as to leave but little room for profit to the miner. Various attempts have from time to time been made to effect the operations in which mercury is employed by other methods: at Freyberg, in Saxony, the amalgamation is accomplished in revolving cylinders, which complete the process in fewer hours than the days consumed in the operation in Mexico and Peru, with a much smaller consumption of the quicksilver. In Europe, mercury is used to recombine the silver after its separation from the ore, while the American miners employ it to effect the separation.

Recent and present researches in electro-chemistry render it certain that before long this resistless agency will supersede the use of quicksilver in the working of metals: its power over the elements of the most intimate combinations of metallic and other bodies is

well known. The experiments of M. Becquerel in this branch of science have as yet been the most successful, and although not so effective as is to be desired, they have acquired an industrial character. Some of the experiments undertaken in Paris were tried upon nearly 10,000 pounds of silver ore from Mexico, and with a favourable result. A method of amalgamation has also been discovered, by means of which five-sixths of the mercury now considered essential to the process will be saved. About forty ounces of silver are obtained from 1000 pounds of ore; the pulverisation or trituration of the latter is effected in South America by the feet of men and mules, instead of water or other power. Human skill, in fact, seems to be deficient in proportion to the riches of nature. A machine somewhat similar to a mortar-crusher was introduced at Potosi to supply the place of animal labour by a European. With this instrument, one man and a mule, costing five shillings per day, could do as much work as twenty Indians, for whom the charge was three pounds. Although this machine was constructed more than twelve years ago, not one of the labourers or workmen employed at the mines has attempted to imitate it: they leave the owner in undisturbed possession of his advantage, and plod on in their old way. This fact alone will suffice to show the waste of capabilities in the search for metals, and the increased return that may be looked for under a more efficient system of management. The conquest of Mexico by the people of the United States may be regarded as a preliminary step in the development of those hitherto neglected resources. With their restless enterprising spirit, roads, canals, and railways will soon be constructed, and the mining returns will reach their maximum.

Baron Humboldt has expressed himself in most positive terms on the subject of the future production of the precious metals. Confining himself to the Mexican states alone, he says—'When we consider the vast extent of surface occupied by the Cordilleras, and the immense number of mineral deposits which have not yet been attacked, we shall understand that New Spain, when better governed, and inhabited by an industrious population, will yield for her own share the seven millions now furnished by the whole of America. In the space of one hundred years, the annual produce of the Mexican mines was raised from 1,000,000 to nearly 5,000,000 of pounds.' In another place he writes—'Europe would be inundated with precious metals if simultaneous labours were commenced, with all the improvements in mining machinery, upon the deposits at Balanos, Batopilas, Sombretete, Rosario, Pachuca, Sultepec, Chihuahua, and many others long and justly celebrated. . . . There is no doubt that the produce of the mines of Mexico might be doubled or tripled in the space of a century. . . . In general, the abundance of silver is such in the chain of the Andes, that taking into consideration the beds yet left intact, or which have been but superficially worked, we should be tempted to believe that Europeans have scarcely begun to comprehend the inexhaustible fund of riches shut up in the new world.' With the proverbial celerity of the United States' population, much of the work here calculated for one hundred years is likely to be achieved in a quarter of that time: the effect on rates of exchange and prices all over the world will be very remarkable. Silver, it is calculated, will be reduced at least one-half in value; and those countries in which the greatest amount of this metal is in circulation will be most exposed to loss. The silver coin circulating in Europe is commonly estimated at £320,000,000, of which France holds three-eighths: according to some authorities, the contingency to be provided for is only a question of time.

'A phenomenon will be exhibited similar to that which complicated prices and transformed so many social positions three centuries ago. The crisis, however, will be much less rapid and less violent; because the mass of silver already acquired by the old continent being

enormous, the influence of even a considerable quantity thrown into the market will make itself felt more slowly. The level between different centres of commerce is more easily established than formerly; a glut upon one isolated point is therefore little to be feared. After some time, the value of silver would be regulated everywhere by the cost price; and if the expenses of production are reduced one half, any country at present in possession of a currency worth £30,000,000, would be the poorer to the amount of £15,000,000, since the quantity of labour and of profit which a shilling would then represent would be diminished by one half.'

Mines of gold and silver are, however, not exclusively confined to America: with the exception of England, there are several in nearly every other country of Europe, and the return from some of these is increasing every year, a cause which will naturally accelerate the effects contemplated. An accurate annual statement is published of the produce of the mines of Russia. In that empire, the metalliferous deposits extend over a region stretching from Kamchatka to Peru—one half of the earth's circle in length, with an average breadth of 8 degrees of latitude. The presence of gold under this portion of the world's surface was early known, and recorded by Herodotus, but was subsequently lost sight of for two thousand years. In 1774, the re-discovery of auriferous sand was made during some repairs to the machinery at the Klutchevsk mines; further discoveries followed, and in 1823, the present system of working was commenced. The richest deposits are found in the Ural and Altai mountains: in 1836, the produce of gold was 13,000 pounds weight; in 1845, it had increased to 45,000 pounds; and as far as ascertained, the returns for 1846 were still augmenting. The gold furnished by Russia is to that of America as 144 to 100. 'So great is the quantity of gold at present existing among civilised nations, that an annual addition of 45,000 pounds would not for a long time cause any sensible difference.'

For some of the facts and conclusions in the foregoing paper, we are indebted to an elaborate article on the subject in the 'Revue des Deux Mondes,' by M. Chevalier.

NIMROD.*

A DRAMATIC poem entitled 'Nimrod' has been exciting some attention; but it is no easy matter for critic or common reader to give any account of it. The reason is, that 'Nimrod' is difficult to read, and the age of earnest laborious readers has gone by. When the men of the present day meet such a work, they peep at it. The critic may write 'a notice;' but it is such notice as a gentleman gives in passing to his unpaid tailor.

The reason why 'Nimrod' is difficult to read is, that its author's unquestionable power is unguided by tact. There are materials in the volume for a good, perhaps a great poem; but these are thrown together into a formless, inartificial heap, which shocks the tasteful, and appals the timid reader. The Greek tragedy, the mediæval mystery, and the melodrama of these last days, all contribute something to the plan, which is therefore alike unsatisfactory to the classical and romantic reader.

Still, even taken as a whole, there is something grand and majestic in the idea of 'Nimrod.' The hero, from a slayer of wild beasts, becomes, in quick gradation, a soldier—a conqueror—a king—the master of the world, and the adopted son of the god Baal. His love for the humble Nahmah lives throughout his exaltation, and he despatches envoys to bring her to be the companion of his throne, binding himself by an irrevocable oath to grant any request she may make. The priests, however, desire to convert the demigod into their tool, and contrive that Nimrod shall appear guilty of impious

* Nimrod, a Dramatic Poem. London: William Pickering, 1848.

neglect of his parents; and when Nahmah betakes herself to his capital, it is with a willing step but a foreboding heart. The prophecies of her spirit are realised. The priests, who have already brought about the death of his parents, have bound him in a tremendous vow to give what he prizes most to Baal; and Nahmah, exacting the equally binding promise he had made to her, acquires the right of perishing on the funeral pile, a sacrifice for her beloved. Such is the really fine conception of a poem the greatest want of which is—a little ordinary tact.

With regard to the execution, a favourable idea will be formed of it from the following dream of Nahmah:—

—“ Methought I stood
Waiting for Nimrod; the slow sinking sun
Made golden pillow of the glowing sword
Whereon his slant beams rested. Sudden a change—
The beams were gone, and yet there was no shade—
No light, and yet all visible. I raised
My wondering eyes, and, mother, there ‘mid cloud
Hiding the darkened west, yet glittering
With some dread foreign splendour, all unknown
To our mild rainbow’s tints, a woman stood:
I see her now—even now, with her white hands
Crossed, pressed upon a bosom which despair
Had made an aching void; her features wan,
As moonbeams on new snow, and fixed and sad.
Her gaze pierced through even to the inner soul,
Where thought in thought makes being, and finds there
Its essence—mingling there with thought and self—
Till she grew part of me, as I of her.
Our past, our present, knowing, sharing all:
I felt she loved and she despaired, yet clung
To love and peace refused; though endless were
The love despairing. Mother, I then was taught
Such love may linger through an endless woe,
Yet no repenting weakness e’er disturb
The calmness of the grief which love endears.”

A fine idea on a hackneyed subject:—

“ I know now whence it comes—yes, there is hope—
Not in this false and mocking world, not here,
But in hereafter—hope—ay, even for him:
The rainbow arches o’er all men alike,
But they alone who raise their swelling eyes
Feast on its wondrous beauty.”

The following is the death of the mother, struck down by the insulting neglect of the son on whom she had doted:—

—“ As Admah heard these bitter words,
She veiled with shivering hands her burning eyes;
Then felt the helpless hands back to her side,
One look intense at thee—but none at him:
The father outraged by unnatural son
The mother feared to gaze on; then erect,
Unbending, with a quickly step, as if
A towering port alone could bear the weight
Of grief, which else had crushed her to the earth,
She passed away. I followed, yet dared not
Approach that awful image of lone woe,
Till at yon height from whence the torrent comes,
Mad, eager rushing with a wild delight
To dash and churn itself among the rocks,
She stood—one long gasp gave the south—then, turning
To this dear home, she shuddered—raised her eyes
To the blue heaven (a lark was singing there,
With joyous trill piercing the water’s roar),
And tottering fell: it might be chance, not purpose,
But the fierce waters with an added shout
Closed round her shrieking not; all help was vain—
And I am here the miserable tale
To tell; more woe to heap on utmost woe.”

This is sufficient to show, that even setting aside the general conception, which we have shown to be fine, there is matter in this volume to repay the adventurous reader.

GOVERNESSES' BENEVOLENT INSTITUTION.

In a former paper we described the nature of the benevolent institution which has been formed, and some time in operation, in London; and we again refer to the subject, for the purpose of mentioning that it is now proposed to add to the institution an Asylum or Permanent Home for Aged Governesses. The directors appear to be encouraged to carry out this object by the success which has attended the other departments of the establishment. Already there is a Provident Fund, by paying into which ladies

connected with education may secure annuities; and also an Annuity Fund, from which aged governesses in depressed circumstances may, by election, obtain annuities of small amount. It is distressing to read of the applications for the benefit of this fund. At the last election there were eighty-four candidates for three annuities of £15 each—“Eighty-four ladies,” says the Report before us, “many reared in affluence, and all accustomed to the comforts and luxuries of at least our middle ranks, seeking an annuity of £15! Of these, seventy were unmarried, and out of this number seven had incomes above £20—two derived from public institutions; sixteen had incomes varying from £1, 16s. to £14; and forty-seven had absolutely nothing! It will be recollected that all these ladies are above fifty years of age; and of the utterly destitute, eighteen were above sixty. It is sometimes asked, Could they not have averted this lamentable condition? The committee would fain hope that all who have received a polling-paper have read the cases to which they refer, to see that out of these seventy ladies no less than fifty-four had not provided for themselves, because they had devoted their salaries or their savings, legacies from relations, and all their earnings, more or less to their families; from the “support of one or both parents for many years” to the educating younger sisters, helping brothers in their onward path, and protecting and educating orphan nephews and nieces.”

It is impossible to peruse this melancholy record without turning round on those to whose negligence and selfishness, in the first instance, governesses too frequently owe their destitution. With every proper allowance for the misfortunes which prevent parents from making provision for their daughters, we must speak emphatically of the injustice and cruelty of rearing them in affluence, and afterwards leaving them to struggle with the stern realities of the world. It would be interesting and useful to know in what condition the parents of the above eighty-four governesses lived, and whether it was absolutely beyond their power, at any time, to provide, by life-assurance, against utter destitution. In the present, as in many similar appeals, we fear that heedlessness, and some degree of selfishness, were concerned; and that to the public is left the performance of duties which it ought to have been the joy of private parties to fulfil. Be this, however, as it may, compassion cannot leave the unfortunate to perish. The efforts, therefore, now making to provide a home for poor and aged governesses, whose cases merit consideration, have our hearty commendation; and we unite with Mrs S. C. Hall—the friend of the friendless—in her eloquent appeal to the charitably-disposed in a late number of the ‘Art Union.’ ‘Are we to suffer those ladies, who, from the poverty of pocket, or poverty of mind of their employers, or from circumstances over which they have no control—who have laboured so honourably and so profitably for us—to find their last resting-place in a lonely garret, or the still more wretched workhouse? We appeal to mothers of families to look back to their own early days, and in reverence to those who taught them, who had patience with them, who made them what they are, to aid us in the erection of a shelter for aged governesses; we appeal to the young to devote their spare time, between this and May, in employments for them, so that if they have not money to bestow, their labour may be converted into money at the bazaar which is to be held early in June on behalf of this great object.’

The bazaar here alluded to is, we understand, to be a species of fancy fair, to be held in the Royal Hospital Grounds, Chelsea, in the first week in June. For every £150 realised by sale or donation, apartments will be found for two aged governesses.

HOW TO ACT IN A MOB.

A mob is a riotous assemblage of persons. Every individual, therefore, who remains in the neighbourhood of it, even from curiosity, helps to constitute that mob. Every one who goes away helps to dissipate it. If, therefore, you are a good citizen, and find yourself in the neighbourhood of persons destroying property, or acting riotously, you should at once range yourself on the side of those who are appointed to keep the peace; or, if there be none at hand, immediately get away from such dangerous and disreputable companions. If you do not, remember that, as a mob is made up of individuals, every respectable person who remains in it helps to encourage the disturbers of the

peace, and to discourage, as far as numbers is concerned, those who are bound to maintain it. The civil and military authorities cannot well discriminate idle onlookers in a mob from more guilty promoters. They are opposed by a riotous assemblage, which it is their duty to disperse; and if you will remain in bad company, you must take the consequences. To stand at the entry of narrow streets and closes is also dangerous. The civil and military authorities are frequently assaulted from such places, which they regard with jealousy, add for their own safety are obliged to clear them. In a free country like this, where the greatest possible liberty is given to the press, and where the right of peaceably meeting to petition our rulers on any subject is fully secured to the poor, all riotous assemblages are without excuse, and must, and will be put down by the lawful authorities, aided by all good citizens. In a sentence, then, the way to act in a mob is, to range yourself on the side of the peace authorities, or at least to get out of the company of riotous persons without delay.—*Industrial Magazine*. [We are glad of an opportunity of enforcing these useful and proper advices, and of deprecating the too common practice of swelling the numbers in a mob from motives of idle and silly curiosity.—*Ed. C. E. J.*]

INJUDICIOUS PATRONAGE.

It is very well to encourage young artists and young poets, provided that the encouragement be judiciously and temperately rendered; but knowingly to raise hopes which can never be realised is, at the best, wanton mockery. To extol beyond reason is often, in effect, to weaken the motives for improvement. How frequently are men spoiled by a false estimation of their own abilities! We could point out instances in the present day of persons refusing to work because they have been dubbed poets; we have known men who would never handle the hoe, nor wield the hammer, nor throw the shuttle, because they could spin rhymes; and we have seen the hand that could pen a sonnet withheld in contempt from the recording of a transaction in business. These individuals revile the world for troubles which they bring upon themselves; and their own drivelling conduct entirely hinders their advancement. They are not alone to blame for their unfortunate position; for they have each in turn been injured by adulation. To versify with facility is an elegant accomplishment; to try to be a true poet is a noble ambition; but the sweetest songs, and the loftiest imaginings, are not incompatible with hard work performed by either hands or brains. As a recreation, literature adds grace and dignity to honest, independent industry; and as a profession, it offers a career which may be successfully pursued by those who have the requisite intellectual aptitude and untiring perseverance. But to make the love of literature a pretext for eating the bread of idleness, is a moral wrong, which deserves unparagoned censure.—*Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*.

PEDLARS AND POETS.

How vastly more strange and extravagant-looking truth is than fiction! Our Edinburgh reviewers deemed it one of the gravest among the many grave offences of Wordsworth, that he should have made the hero of the 'Excursion' a pedlar. 'What,' they ask, 'but the most wretched and provoking perversity of taste and judgment could induce any one to place his chosen advocate of wisdom and virtue in so absurd and fantastic a condition? Did Mr Wordsworth really imagine that his favourite doctrines were likely to gain anything in point of effect or authority by being put into the mouth of a person accustomed to higgie about tape or brass sleeve-buttons? Or is it not plain that, independent of the ridicule and disgust which such a personification must give to many of his readers, its adoption exposes his work throughout to the charge of revolting incongruity, and utter disregard of probability or nature?' If the critics be thus severe on the mere choice of so humble a hero, what would they not have said had the poet ventured to represent his pedlar not only as a wise and meditative man, but also as an accomplished writer, and a successful cultivator of natural science—the author of a great national work, eloquent as that of Buffon, and incomparably more true in its facts and observations? Nay, what would they have said if, rising to the extreme of extravagance, he had ventured to relate that the pedlar, having left the magnificent work unfinished at his death, an accomplished prince—the nephew of by far the most puissant monarch of modern times—took it up, and com-

pleted it in a volume, bearing honourable reference and testimony, in almost every page, to the ability and singular faithfulness of his humbler predecessor, the 'Wanderer.' And yet this strange story, so full of 'revolting incongruity and utter disregard of probability or nature,' would be exactly that of the Paisley pedlar, Alexander Wilson, the author of the 'American Ornithology'—a work completed by a fervent admirer of the pedlar's genius, Prince Charles Lucien Bonaparte.—*Bass Rock*.

DANCING AS AN EXERCISE.

A few words may be offered in this place in favour of dancing as an exercise, and as a school-room recreation. Exercising so many muscles otherwise little used—exercising them fully and duly, and without violence—exercising them to the cheering influence of music—exercising them in forms of grace and beauty—dancing may be made an important and valuable part of the physical education, and as such should be spoken of, and promoted by, the powerful voice of the medical public. The balanced action of the opposing muscles, the active use of the different articulations, the extensive and varied action of the spinal muscles, effected by dancing, and the degree to which the mental excitement produced by it enables the exercise to be made use of without undue fatigue, are strong reasons for so decided and favourable an opinion; and this, without obtrusive interference with opinions as to the propriety, or otherwise, of carrying the practice of dancing to an excess in the after-life, and making it the plea for late hours, &c. Let people think as they will of public balls, or even of private balls; with the conscientious opinions of others it is not my wish, nor intention, to interfere; but to dancing in the school-room, or among the members of the family circle, few will object; and it is not too much to say that if dancing could be made a daily, not nightly, exercise among the people of all classes, the healthiness and the expectation of life, as well as its happiness, would be increased.—*Robertson on Diet and Regimen*.

RAILWAYS.

The following table relative to the capital invested in railways is peculiarly interesting at the present period:—

	Capital and Loans Authorised.
1. Railways sanctioned during twenty years, from 1826 to 1845 inclusive, comprehending stock and loans authorised according to Mr Ker Porter's table. (See 'Progress of the Nation, last edition, p. 322.)	L.153,435,837
2. Railways begun or projected under acts passed in 1846 (273 acts), per parliamentary return of stock and loans authorised.	132,617,368
3. Ditto ditto under acts passed in 1847 (18 acts), stock and loans, enumerated in 'Companion to the Almanac' for 1848, p. 42, et seq., just published.	35,053,324
	L.321,126,529

These enormous sums exceed by *threefold* the amount of foreign loans and joint-stock bubbles which in 1826 brought the commercial and landed interest of this empire to the brink of ruin; and the railway projects for the last two years exceed our national expenditure in the years of Leipsic and Waterloo.

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